PROPOSED RULE: REASONABLE FURTHER PROGRESS REQUIREMENTS FOR THE 1997 8-HOUR OZONE NATIONAL AMBIENT AIR QUALITY STANDARD

FACT SHEET

ACTION

- On December 15, 2010, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed that states may not take credit for emission reductions from outside the nonattainment area when demonstrating that they are making reasonable progress toward achieving clean air.

- This proposal also seeks comment on whether, alternatively, it would be appropriate for states to rely on emission reductions credit from outside the nonattainment area when demonstrating that they are making reasonable progress toward achieving clean air.

- Today's action proposes to revise an earlier interpretation of its rule regarding requirements for Reasonable Further Progress (RFP) that allowed certain credits from outside the nonattainment area to meet the RFP requirements for the 8- hour ozone national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS).

- This proposed rule will affect any ozone nonattainment areas required to meet reasonable further progress goals. For most nonattainment areas, State Implementation Plans or SIPs must provide for reasonable further progress toward attaining the 1997 ground-level ozone standard through emission reductions phased in from the time of SIP submission out to the attainment date.

- Current EPA regulations, issued in August 2009, allow states to take credit in their RFP plans for VOC and NOx emission reductions within 100 and 200 kilometers respectively, outside the nonattainment area. The Natural Resources Defense Council petitioned for reconsideration of the August 2009 rule.

- On May 13, 2010, EPA agreed to reconsider the issue of which emission reductions can apply toward the RFP plans. Today's action addresses this reconsideration.

BACKGROUND

- Ground-level ozone is not emitted directly into the air, but forms through a reaction of nitrogen oxides (NOx) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in the presence of sunlight.

- Emissions from industrial facilities and electric utilities, motor vehicle exhaust, gasoline vapors, and chemical solvents are the major man-made sources of NOx and VOCs.

- For purposes of meeting the ground-level ozone standard, reasonable further progress is defined as specific annual reductions in emissions of volatile organic compounds and oxides of nitrogen as necessary to attain the standards.

- EPA set the 1997 ground-level ozone standard at 0.08 parts per million (ppm). Even though it has been revised, this standard remains in effect. Many areas throughout the country continue work towards attaining it.

- On March 12, 2008, EPA significantly strengthened the 1997 8-hour primary ozone standard, designed to protect public health, to a level of 0.075 ppm. Subsequently, EPA agreed to reconsider the standard and proposed further strengthening the primary ozone standard to a level within the range of 0.060-0.070 parts per million. EPA has not yet finalized any revision to the primary ozone standard.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- To download the action from EPA's website, please visit: http://www.epa.gov/air/ozonepollution/actions.html#impl

- Today's final rule and other background information are also available either electronically at http://www.regulations.gov, EPA's electronic public docket and comment system, or in hardcopy at the EPA Docket Center's Public Reading Room.

    - The Public Reading Room is located in the EPA Headquarters Library, Room Number 3334 in the EPA West Building, located at 1301 Constitution Ave., NW, Washington, DC. Hours of operation are 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. eastern standard time, Monday through Friday, excluding Federal holidays.

    - Visitors are required to show photographic identification, pass through a metal detector, and sign the EPA visitor log. All visitor materials will be processed through an X-ray machine as well. Visitors will be provided a badge that must be visible at all times.

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